1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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Fig. 1. A chena settlement of the Henebedda Veddas

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Fig. 2. Henebedda Veddas of the Namadewa clan inhabiting the chena settlement

[facing p. 36]

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

in one instance there had been intermarriage with Sinhalese, and we suspected this in other cases, though the majority appear to be reasonably pure-blooded.

These people make chenas[1] on which they live temporarily in bark-covered huts; Plate X, figure 1, represents the chena settlement of the local group of the Namadewa *warige*, some of the members of which are shown in Plate X, figure 2. They gather honey and hunt, several of them possess guns, and some of them rear cattle for the Sinhalese villagers. Indeed, for Veddas their lot is singularly happy, since they live in the heart of the park country where game is still abundant. Bailey first induced some Veddas in the Nilgala district to make chenas about the middle of the last century, before which all the Veddas in this district were probably living their natural hunting, honey-gathering life.

It is not often that a community that has taken to the semi-civilised life of chena cultivation is seen, in which its members are so healthy and well fed, for Veddas dislike settling down and do not generally do so until they find they can no longer subsist on the game in the country, when they either drift into Sinhalese settlements, or make extremely rough chenas for themselves, the produce of which is seldom sufficient to feed the community. Besides which, as is the case with the Sinhalese peasants themselves, the crop is often pledged to Moormen pedlars before it is reaped. The poor Veddas then subsist as best they can on yams, honey and berries, and usually fall a prey to fever. Several Veddas in this wretched condition were seen between Namal Oya and Bandaraduwa, while those at Godatalawa were scarcely better off.

In the Nilgala district the conditions are different. Chena making and cattle rearing had been introduced while game was still abundant, families are still able to leave the chena settlement and hunt and gather honey, living during such times in rock shelters within their own hunting boundary. However, the

[1] Bailey defines a chena as "a patch of ground cleared from the forest for cultivation. The jungle is burnt down, a crop taken off, and then suffered to grow up again: it is recleared again after intervals of from five to ten years," *Trans. Ethnol. Soc. N.S.* Vol. II, 1863, p. 281.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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Veddas are coming more and more in contact with their Sinhalese neighbours, and it is extremely unlikely that the next generation will remain pure.

We visited two of the nearest chena settlements of these people, the huts (Plate X, figure 1) were about as well built as those of the average Sinhalese chena, though the cultivation itself was certainly less systematic and orderly. The Namadewa folk lived in one settlement while the Morane and Unapane inhabited another.

Although all these Veddas have come in contact with the Sinhalese and are visited by Moormen hawkers for trade purposes—as indeed even the wildest have been for many generations—they have retained their old custom of not allowing the stranger in the midst of their settlement where he might meet their women. A rough shelter had been built at one corner of the Namadewa chena in which the pedlars sat and waited until the Vedda men came to bargain with them. Hence in the main these people have retained their old virtues of truthfulness, chastity and courtesy. The first, upon which practically every observer has remarked, was modified in a particular direction, for they all wished to show that they were pure-blooded Veddas of the Morane and Unapane clans, which were considered superior to the rest. So the Namadewa men lied freely, declaring that they belonged to Morane and Unapane, and one young man, otherwise a good informant, insisted that he was still unmarried, as he did not want to own that his wife was a Namadewa woman. Cases of intermarriage with Sinhalese were also emphatically denied, or only admitted after much cross-examination. Plate III represents a number of the men we met at Bendiyagalge.

Danigala. The Danigala Veddas of the Nilgala district present a peculiar phase of the clash of civilization and barbarism. They are the classical "wild Veddas" of Ceylon described by so many travellers; their descent is pure but their own customs have been almost entirely forgotten, and are certainly ignored at the present day. They live in the park country, have a chena and a banana garden, and do a good trade in cattle both by herding for the Sinhalese, retaining every fifth calf as is the

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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custom of the country and also selling those they have bred themselves. However, all this was unknown to us when we first met the people, nor would it have been possible to guess their prosperous condition from the first sight of their settlement. It was well known throughout the Vedirata that investigations were about to be made among the Veddas, and all the village headmen had been given instructions to render assistance. They therefore told the Veddas to expect us, and would have sent for them to come to the Public Works Department bungalow on our arrival had we not expressly stated that we preferred to visit the people in their homes. A very rough track led to the top of the Danigala Hill, about 1200 feet high, where, on a rounded shoulder of rock, stood the skeleton hut of the Danigala Veddas shown in Plate II. This was built on the pattern of the ordinary village Vedda habitations but entirely lacked the slats of bark which make the sides moderately weather proof. By its side was an even rougher shelter consisting of a large bough with the smaller branches trimmed and overlaid with banana leaves. Kaira the patriarch or "senior" of the group sat outside the hut with three other men; there were also present three women, a boy of about 12, and two younger children, and although both of the latter had many teeth they suckled persistently. This hut and some of its occupants are shown in Plate II, the rough shelter by its side in Plate XI, figure 1.

Although Mr Bibile, whom all these people knew quite well, was with us, they were quite apathetic, their attitude was clearly not the result of shyness, but simply due to the fact that they took no interest in our presence; the women continued to suckle their infants and the men squatted or lay upon the rocks and chewed in gloomy silence, and when addressed they grunted "yes" or "no." One of the infants who smiled and cooed and tried to gain our attention was the only member of the group who seemed to take the least notice of us. Kaira told us that the people we now saw represented all that remained of the Danigala Veddas. We noticed some bananas (which do not grow wild in Ceylon) on the further side of the ridge and we asked to see their plantation. A prompt denial of its existence was the result, though Kaira afterwards told Mr Bibile that he

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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Fig. 1. Mixed Sinhalese and Vedda chena at Bandarawela

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Fig. 2. Uniche Veddas

[facing p. 42]

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

they had been called upon to pay a chena tax as well as 1·50 Rs. per adult male road tax. Of course they were unable to collect this money and they dreaded the ensuing penalty, that of serving on the roads, for should the two young men leave the settlement the old man and woman and the girl must starve, the first being too old to work and the woman a cripple. Their plight would have been just as bad had the young man gone to work on some Sinhalese rice fields in order to earn the money[1].

Degenerate Veddas in the neighbourhood of the main Badulla-Batticaloa road[2]. The main road from Badulla to the east coast passes through country that was once the centre of the Vedirata, and on either side of it at a distance of some 2—6 miles are various settlements of half-bred and degenerate Veddas who will soon be entirely lost among the Sinhalese. Plate XIV, figure 1, represents two men of this class: it is obvious that the young man would pass for a Sinhalese, indeed in spite of his bow and arrows and traditional scanty Vedda garb the condition of his hair shows that he has at least been following a Sinhalese mode of life. It is possible that the whole Vedda get-up may have been assumed for our benefit, though in view of the comparative skill with which he handled his bow we do not think this likely. The old man was doubtless one of the last degenerate Veddas of the district.

Before passing to village Veddas a word must be said concerning the Omuni folk and those of Unuwatura Bubula. Sir James Emerson Tennant, in his work *Ceylon* published in 1859, states that Mr Atherton, A.G.A., in conjunction with the Wesleyan Methodist Missionaries, attempted to civilise the Veddas[3]. In 1838 "cottages were built for them in their own district, rice land assigned to them, wells dug, coconuts planted, two communities were speedily settled at Vippammadvo." A

[1] This is a not uncommon practice at the present day.

[2] This road is only some forty or fifty years old, Mr Warren tells me that "the old road from Badulla to Batticaloa joined the road from Alutnuwara. It crossed the present cart road about Kallodi and must have worked its way in the neighbourhood of the present road to Tumpalancholai and so to the ferry into Batticaloa." Part of this track is still used as a short cut. "There was another road from Passara through Medagama past Makakandiyaweva to Mandur; *tavilam* travel that way now."

[3] Tennant, *op. cit.* Vol. II, p. 447.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

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Fig. 1. Vedda settlement at Unnwatura Bubula

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Fig. 2. Village Veddas of Dambana

[Facing p. 48]

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

points were left doubtful. The extent of their neighbours' influence upon this community may be gauged to a certain degree by the following fact. When visiting the shaman we asked him to show us his *aude* and other sacred objects (as will be seen later, certain beads are held sacred in this community), he replied that he did not keep them at his own hut because of the noxious influence due to the presence of the women[1], but that the Sinhalese *gamarale*[2] took charge of them for him. We then went together to the house of the *gamarale*; this consisted of a hut divided by a partition at the back, one room being the sleeping room and the other the granary, and a large open barn in front, with its roof continuous with that of the hut. In the part of the barn nearest the rooms, the women of the household were cooking and pounding rice, while the back was railed off to form a byre in which a number of calves were tethered and into which the cows were driven at night. When it was pointed out that there were also women living in this house the shaman explained that their influence was counter-balanced by the presence of the cows. Physically some of the Unuwatura Bubula Veddas must be regarded as tolerably pure-blooded, since they included some of the shortest men we met. One man measured only about 1360 millimetres (53½ inches), but probably he is to be regarded as almost a dwarf.

VILLAGE VEDDAS.

The village Veddas form a class which it is most difficult to describe briefly, yet fairly. The term must not be taken to apply to degenerate Veddas who have lost their jungle characteristics and independent habits under Sinhalese encroachment. Doubtless many such folk do live as Sinhalese in chena settlements for a short time before their extinction in the surrounding mass of peasant Sinhalese. But this is not the sense in which the Sinhalese apply the term Gan Veddo (village Veddas), nor is it the sense in which we use the term. Knox speaks of "wild"

[1] We afterwards ascertained that *hile* was the name for the ceremonial uncleanliness of women.

[2] The *gamarale* of a Sinhalese village is the headman, who is responsible for the cultivation of the village lands and generally directs the agricultural affairs of the community.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

and "tame" Veddas, and to come to more recent times, there is evidence that a hundred years ago there were organized communities of house-building Veddas, while certain Veddas received grants of land from the Sinhalese kings, and on these lived as definite village-communities until quite recently, probably till within the last half century.

Village Veddas of Uva Bintenne.

Dambani. The present community of Dambani, in the jungle between Kallodi and Alutnuwara, may serve as an example of a village Vedda community. Some twenty families living in tolerably built houses keep buffaloes and cultivate chena, the latter being big enough not only to supply their own wants, but to permit of a lively trade with Sinhalese traders. These Dambani folk have been known to the Arachi of Belligala as a flourishing community in the same social condition for the last thirty years, and he states that they were in this condition in his father's time. A short visit was sufficient to show that here was a community which, though it had lost many Vedda beliefs, still retained others, and was so strong and independent that there was little likelihood of its immediate fusion with the surrounding population. Physically these people (Plate XV, figure 2), though somewhat darker and often of a stouter build than the Danigala Veddas, could not be mistaken for Sinhalese. The Dambani people are unfortunately "show" Veddas, that is to say, people who have been sent for so often by white visitors that they have learnt certain tricks, which they show off directly they see a European, and so constantly demand presents that serious work with them is an impossibility.

A positive advantage which has, however, arisen from this condition, is that these folk have kept up the remains of the so-called Vedda language. The headman in whose district these Veddas are situated is largely responsible for this, for he always speaks to them in their own dialect in harsh tones. He is an extremely kind old man, and answers definite questions perfectly truthfully, yet like so many Sinhalese, he generally says only what he thinks is expected of him, hence, the belief in the fierce sullen ways of the Veddas and their inability to laugh has been

1;Seligmann & Seligmann I-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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622 unconsciously fostered by him. A brief account of our visit to
156 Dambani will best show the present condition of these people.

While in the jungle we were suddenly met by four Veddas,
177 who greeted the Arachi in a deep and apparently fierce tone, he
576 returning the greeting in the same manner. To our surprise these men came up to one of us (C. G. S.), shook hands, and then turned and led us to their village, on the way to which we passed a couple of "tame" buffalo that tried to charge
[361] us. There were three huts in the village and the headman's wife—not at all shy or diffident—after shaking hands took one of us (B. Z. S.) by the arm and led her into a hut. This
[342] had a good roof and walls of sticks, only one side being closed by bark slats, it was full of pumpkins and other chena
126 produce, which were however soon removed. We then sat down to take vocabularies, as the talk going on around us sounded quite different from Sinhalese and they professed not to understand our interpreter who was unable to follow them. So we
574 spoke through the Arachi. The headman's wife brought us each
609 some honey and yams and commanded us to eat. We sucked
43) the honey comb, but that did not satisfy her and she tried to feed one of us (B. Z. S) with yams herself and to pour water down her throat. Aftergiving us a few Vedda words, the Vidane (headman) began to talk very angrily and then stalked out of the hut. He complained that we had not given him presents and refused to speak another word until we gave him something. Other men came into the village making a total of about 10 or 11 grown men and some boys, but only two middle-aged women, the wife of the Vidane and another, so it was evident that there were other huts in the neighbourhood. We told the Vidane that our carriers would bring presents and made him and a few other men come back to the hut. But after every two or three words there were more angry protests and our interpreter explained that "other white men had not treated them so." When they raised their voices their talk sounded fierce, every word being shouted with emphasis and accompanied by scowling looks. Then we found out from the Arachi that these like the Danigala Veddas were "show Veddas" who had been utterly spoilt by presents from "distinguished visitors," some of whom

1:Seligmann & Seligmann S-S (1907-1908) 1911
AN3 Vedda AN3

these village Veddas, though they seem to be of a somewhat morose disposition. He also said they take no interest in things unknown to them. However, the phonograph attracted as much attention and interest as it always had from Veddas and Sinhalese alike, and we distinctly saw one Vedda smile when his song was reproduced.

The ahena settlement at Wallampolla was seen, but here it appeared that much intermarriage had taken place with the Sinhalese.

Maigoda. There are a number of people very mixed blooded, but calling themselves Veddas, living at Maigoda on the shores of Horaborawewa, a beautiful tank traditionally associated with the Veddas. They have dropped their old Vedda customs so entirely that the local Sinhalese no longer look upon them as true village Veddas, an attitude that has perhaps been fostered by the fact that here in Uva where the Veddas are exempt from all taxation these people pay road tax. Such at least was the point of view of the Arachi of Alutnuwara, "how can these people be Veddas?—they pay road tax." In spite of this there is no doubt that they are largely of Vedda descent and in many instances remember their marriage. They live in very poorly built houses and depend largely on the seeds of the lotus for food. They still pose as pure-blooded Veddas to white visitors, and have been recently described by Drs H. M. Hillier and W. H. Furness, 3rd. "We followed the jungle path along the eastern shore of the lake, sometimes over outcrops of granite, or down by the lake side...and after following our guide through thick undergrowth for half-an-hour, suddenly, and without warning, we came out into a cleared space, where there was the merest excuse for a hut, and beside it a man and woman squatting side by side and cooking something in a blackened earthen pot, which rested on a fire of twigs and branches; a little beyond them were more huts and more women and children—lo! the Village Veddahs. The elderly man and woman whom we first saw had between them scarcely a yard of coarse cloth as clothing, their hair hung loose in dishevelled twists and strings about their faces, and they both squatted so low that their knees stood up above their shoulders. But the most impressive thing about

511 them was their unhuman apathy and utter lack of interest.... Although we came upon them unexpectedly, and although, as they told us later, they had never before seen white people, nevertheless, neither of them showed the slightest astonishment or interest in our appearance; both glanced up for a second, and then cast down their eyes, and continued silently shelling the seeds of the lotus pods beside them, and stirring the simmering pot over the fire. Near the other huts, women and children were occupied at the same task; some were sitting on the ground around a pile of lotus pods, others were attending to the cooking. At first the children seemed a little frightened at us, but contrary to expectation, did not rush off to the jungle....

511 "At the time of our visit there were but three men and 342 seventeen women and children in Makulugulla; these were distributed in five shelters or huts. The chief's house was made [184 of four upright posts and a flat thatched roof of palm leaves, but 622] without walls or flooring. The other huts were shaped like A-tents, one was thatched with coarse grass, the other covered with large circular leaves of the lotus. The remaining two huts were shaped like wall tents, the roofs of grass or palm-leaf thatch, and the walls of bark. They all had dirt floors, and not one of them was over eight feet square. In three of the huts the utensils, such as earthen pots, baskets, gourds and mats, were piled on the ground at one end; in only two were there any [356 shelves. The floor of each, however, was neatly swept, and even outside the huts, where all but the aged and the very young slept, the ground had been swept clear of leaves and twigs.

511 "The cooking was all done out of doors, at a fire-place consisting of three stones; and the cook was honoured by [352 having a seat, either a block of wood or the dried skin of the 359 Axis deer or the Muntjac. We were also surprised to see their providence, in that they had quite a good-sized bundle of dry 364 firewood on store in the huts. We expected to find the village reeking with refuse and decaying game, of which we heard that they were fond, but the place was free from smells, and really 361 clean. The jungle at this spot was composed of large trees and

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-S (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

sparse undergrowth, so that it was an ideal place for a camp within easy distance of water. They may remain at this place three or four months, or even longer, before they seek a new village site, but probably they never go far from Horabora tank, on account of the great supply of lotus and other seeds which the lake affords.

"None of them is tattooed, and they wear very few ornaments. Both sexes, however, perforate the lobe of the ear, and through the opening pass a wire, strung with beads or seeds. The women sometimes enlarge this perforation, and wear in it a plug, made by rolling a strip of palm leaf into a cylinder, from one half to an inch in diameter.

"We got from them one of their earthen bowls that had rough patterns drawn upon it, but saw no other evidence of artistic ability. They make coarse mats and baskets of reeds and strips of bamboo, and use gourds and coconut shells for water bottles and cups. Spoons and ladles they make from a piece of coconut shell, with two holes, on one side, and a stick thrust through them to form a handle[1]."

Village Veddas of Tamankaduwa.

There are a number of communities of village Veddas in Tamankaduwa, all of which show marked evidence of intermarriage with the Sinhalese and Tamils.

Elalatalliya. There is a large Vedda chena here, but most of its inhabitants were away at the time of our visit, those present appeared distinctly half-bred. Their mode of life is similar to that prevalent at Dambani and Bulugahalanda, i.e. they are occupied in chena cultivation, cattle rearing, and do a little hunting, but as they have not specially preserved it for show purposes they have forgotten the Vedda dialect. However, they remember their marriage and practise exogamy; they also reverence the Hae Yaka.

Kalukalaeba. Another settlement was seen at Kalukalaeba, here were about twelve small huts, all empty on our arrival, as it was the harvesting season and the people had gone to live

[1] "Notes of a trip to the Veddas of Ceylon." *Bulletin of the Free Museum of Science and Art of the University of Pennsylvania*, Vol. III, 1900.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann B-S (1907-1908) 1911
AXS Vedda AXS

word arrived from the elder of the district. Then one of the archers accompanied him to the boundary which took between two and three hours' walking. Here he had once more to wait until word arrived from the elders of this district, whereupon the first guide handed him over to a second and then returned. In this way the second guide brought him to a third, and the process continued until he had had more than twelve guides, being over seven days on the way before he reached the province of Batticaloa and the flat district which extended to the coast, and is inhabited by Tamils. He and his ten or twelve companions never suffered any want on the way, as the Veddahs supplied them with food, consisting of good dried venison which was preserved in honey, ground nuts (probably yams) and fruit. But none of the Veddahs spoke a word with him or his companions because it was so prescribed by their customs[1]."

Nevill's account of the life led by both the wilder and the more sophisticated "forest" Veddas has been quoted on pp. 81 and 82, in the chapter on Family Life. Nevill's experience was chiefly gained among the Veddas of the Bintenne, but if rather less emphasis be laid on the hut built "close to a place where water can be got," and it be realised that even during the hot dry season rock shelters are the common homes of the wilder Veddas to the east of the Badulla-Batticaloa road, all that he says on this subject can be implicitly accepted.

Commenting upon Nevill's account, the Sarasins point out that since trespassing on land belonging to another group leads to fierce quarrels, the condition described by Nevill must be taken to imply that the territory of each group includes the whole or a part of one considerable hill or rock *massif*. Our experience enables us to confirm this suggestion, and it will be shown later that not only are hills the property of particular groups, but that subject to the rights of the group there is also personal property in hills. Text figure 4 is a sketch map of the territory of the Henebedda Veddas, and roughly shows the position of their caves, which are named Bendiyagalge, Pattiavelagalge, Hitibeminigalge, Punchikiriammagalge, Uhapitagalge, Maladeniyagalge and Kirawanbalagalge. The last is almost

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 479.

too small and too exposed to be called a shelter, consisting as it does of a small space under an overhanging slab which offers scarcely any protection from the weather, for which reason it seemed that it was never used. Bodhyaghe, situated about the centre of the Hombadda territory, consists of two rock

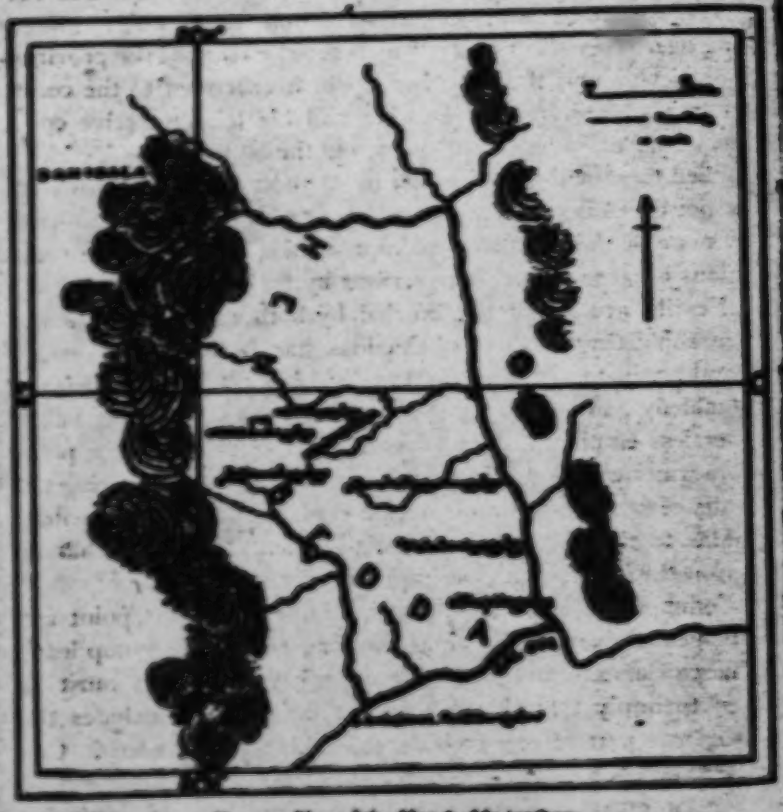

Fig. 4. Plan of the Hombadda territory.

shelters formed by a single mass of rock, broadly speaking rectangular in shape, with its long axis running roughly from north to south. The rock mass is somewhat tilted so that its southern edge is high above the plateau towards which its northern extremity slopes, and the whole rock somewhat resembles an immense wedge. Its eastern face has weathered

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

so as to form two rock shelters, each of which has a well-cut drip ledge in no respect differing from those admittedly cut by the Sinhalese about the time that Buddhism was introduced to the island, and the lower cave has in addition two square sockets cut in its roof resembling those discovered by Mr F. Lewis at Nuwaragala and figured by him[1]. Further, there are three steps cut in the solid rock shelters, and other smaller steps and signs of ancient working are to be found in the caves, though there are no inscriptions on the rocks of either of these caves, as there are below the drip ledge of Uhapitagalge.

Pattiavelagalge lies at a distance of rather less than an hour's walk to the S.W. of Bendiyagalge, at the base of the rocky hills forming the boundary of the territory of the Henebedda community. It was said that the name of this cave was derived from *pattia*, a place where cattle were tied, and *vela*, a field, the reason for the name being that about 100 years ago a Sinhalese chief, recognised by the Veddas as being partly of Vedda descent, was allowed to come and live here and pasture his cattle. This man may have been a fugitive during the rebellion of 1818, but this could not be determined with certainty. Hitibeminigalge lies a short distance due west of Bendiyagalge.

Punchihiriammagalge is a small shelter situated almost due south of Bendiyagalge and near the main track across the country. At the present day it is often used by Tamil gall-nut gatherers. Maladeniyagalge, about two miles from Ambilinne rest-house, is also much used by gall-nut collectors. Uhapitagalge, shown in Plate XVII, figure 2, has a well-carved drip ledge, beneath which is the inscription in Brāhmi characters referred to on p. 22.

The natural boundaries of the Henebedda territory as well as the fact that they still have as neighbours the Danigala Veddas, who exercise a jealous supervision of the border on that side on which there is no well-marked natural boundary, made this particularly easy territory to map out. The Sitala Wanniya territory, which we have attempted to delimit in text figure 5 was more difficult and its boundary is only an approximation.

[1] *Proc. Roy. As. Soc., Ceylon Branch*, Vol. XIX, 1909.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

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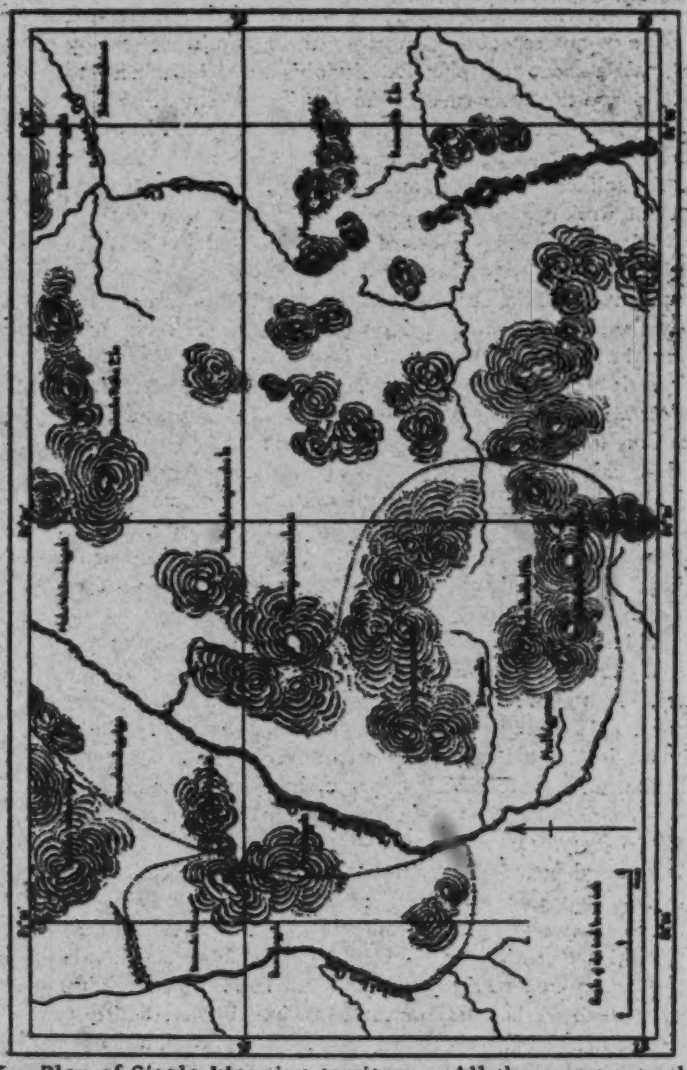

Fig. 5. Plan of Sitala Wanniya territory. All the country to the west of the dotted and broken lines is the property of the Sitala Wanniya community. The land belonging exclusively to Handuna and Nila is outlined |--|--|--, their common boundary line passing through Marinagala and the western portion belonging to Handuna. The land claimed by Kaira is indicated by —··—··, and where the boundary is doubtful by ·····. The country to the east is the property of the Veddas of Kovil Vanamai (Bandaraduwa).

CHAPTER XII

COAST VEDDAS

THE Coast Veddas or Verdas occupy a number of settlements in the Tamil zone on the east coast. They exceed in number both the Village Veddas of Bintenne and their wilder neighbours of the borders of Uva and the Eastern Province; this is no doubt due to the fact that in the majority of Coast Veddas there is a large admixture of Tamil blood, and the comparatively thriving condition of their settlements must be attributed to the same cause. The date of their first arrival on the coast and of their subsequent intermarriage with the Tamils is quite uncertain; the latter state that there have always been Veddas in the neighbourhood of the sites they now occupy, but the Veddas themselves have a tradition that they come from inland. Knox does not mention them, but Nevill considers that they come from Sabaragamuwa (Sufferagam), being driven thence in the 17th century.

"The Vaeddas say that they never were related to these Coast Vaeddas, and do not know when they came to the Coast, or where they came from, nor did they ever hear that they belonged to any waruge of the race.

"The Coast Vaeddas do not know when they came or how they came, but they say that long ago their ancestors came from the Gala, far beyond the hills to the west. They also sometimes say they came from Kukulu-gammaeda and spread out along the Coast. Some say this is Kukulugam near the Verukal; others suppose it to be somewhere far away[1]."

[1] *Op. cit.* Vol. 1. p. 183.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-6 (1907-1908) 1911
AXS Vedda AXS

101 We found that the Coast Veddas spoke of themselves as
193 Verdas and said that long ago their fathers came from inland.
191 They all speak Tamil, but some assert that they still know, and at times use among themselves, their old Vedda language, but when we asked the men who made this statement to speak in their ancestral dialect they spoke Sinhalese[1]. Besides this a few of the older men know the names of some of the Vedda *mayge*, while others are able to trace their descent to them.

142 The Coast Vedda is darker, taller and more stoutly built than the true Veddas. In fact they generally resemble low caste Tamils, yet in almost every settlement there are one or two men shorter than their comrades and presenting an almost typical Vedda caste of countenance. The women are all much [291] bigger than true Vedda women and would pass for Tamils, after whose fashion they dress.

Plate LXVIII, figs. 1 and 2, represent Verdas from settlements to the north of Kalkudah.

241 The Verdas build comfortable huts in small clearings, usually
342 within a mile of the sea; they cultivate maize and pumpkins and other easily grown crops round their houses and in patches of clearing in the surrounding jungle.

415 They have plenty of pots and baskets and also possess drums
534 and fishing gear, so that their mode of life differs but little from
621 that of the poor and low caste Tamils who are their neighbours. One, two, or more rarely, three houses stand in each clearing, and it seems that the people living in each clearing are closely related by blood or connected by marriage.

361 The chief Verda settlements north of Batticaloa are Pellan-
505 chenai near Kalkudah 20 miles from Batticaloa and at Varkanari some 10 miles north of Kalkudah on the far side of the river which is crossed by a ferry at Valarchchenai. At Panichchenkeni some 14 miles further north is another ferry, where the local Verdas act as ferrymen, while there are two other Verda settlements some three miles beyond the ferry at sites called Vellaiade and Kandaladi respectively.

[1] Nevill (loc. cit.) noticed the same state of affairs, he said "Only the old men speak what they call Veddas, which is pure but quaint Sinhalese with a Vaddha accent, as a rule, though mixed with some words characteristic of true Vaddas."

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

There are a few Verdas at Panichchenkeni, while near Vakarai still further to the north there is a Verda settlement of considerable size. Some eight miles beyond this are two Verda settlements Parchenai and Nargantonai situated close together. We heard of other smaller settlements of Coast Veddas in the neighbourhood of Batticaloa, but these were not visited as time was short and it appeared that those Verdas we did not see differed in no respect from those we met. We were told that formerly there were Coast Veddas south of Batticaloa and we later discovered that there were, and still are, certain shrines or temples within a few miles of the coast (e.g. at Mandur), which were generally recognised as Vedda shrines at which Veddas especially worshipped. This matter has been alluded to in Chapter VIII, and here it is only necessary to point out that the religion of the Coast Veddas is strongly tinged with Tamil customs and beliefs; indeed, many Verdas had Hindu sect marks upon their foreheads.

Some, but not all, of the Coast Veddas know the names of the *waruge* to which they belong, and a few also know the names of some of the more important *waruge* of the Veddas inland. Uru *waruge* appears to be the *waruge* to which most of the Coast Veddas who remembered their ancestral *waruge* belonged, but a few men stated that they belonged to Ogatam, Kavatam, Umata or Umatam, Aembalaneduwe and Aembale *waruge*; the last named and the one before it probably being the same as the Aembela *waruge* found inland. Some of the Coast Veddas whom we questioned said they had heard of, and still knew of certain of the old Vedda *waruge*, and such men were generally able to mention Morane *waruge* while fewer also knew of Unapane *waruge*.

The Coast Veddas have become expert fishermen and make and use various forms of nets including a cast net. They also spear and shoot fish, using a bifid iron spear-head which they have adopted from the Tamils. For shooting fish they use the usual Vedda bow, but the arrow has become a harpoon with a shaft as long as the bow into which the iron with its running line fits loosely. One of the nets used by the Coast Veddas is seen drying behind the house in the background of Plate LXIX,

2:Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

calca and Badulla. The largest Veddah population is in the former district, and these are they of whom Tennent principally writes, but they are by no means the wildest specimens of the race. They have not maintained so complete an isolation from other races as those I am about to describe, and consequently are not worthy of the same attention.*

It is the "Wilder Sort" of Veddahs, as Knox calls them, of whom I desire to place on record an accurate description, before they quite pass away and are forgotten.

They roam about through the park-like district of Nilgala, which presents, of its kind, perhaps the loveliest scenery in this beautiful island, and wander among the forests of Bintenne—that "Land of Bintan all covered with mighty woods and filled with abundance of deer", where Knox tells us these dreaded "Wild Men" dwelt.

It would be difficult to conceive more barbarous types of the human race than they present. Yet there are degrees even in their barbarism, for those of Nilgala are wilder than their brethren of Bintenne. They are fewer in number, and more diminutive in stature. They are distributed through their lovely country in small septs, or families, occupying generally caves in the rocks, though some have little bark huts. They depend almost solely on hunting for their support,† and hold little communication even with each other.

Few in number as they are,—they did not exceed seventy-two persons in 1858,—still no other human beings are to be found for many miles round their habitations, and this seclusion has caused them to retain peculiarities which are fast disappearing, or have already disappeared from among even the wildest of Bintenne.‡

There, there are both wild and settled Veddahs. Of the latter

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* See Tennent's remarks on the late Mr. Atherton's praiseworthy and successful labours in civilizing the Veddahs of the Batticaloa district, where there are now only some two hundred and fifty who, having resisted all his efforts to improve them, still live in caves near the rock called Gunner's Quoin, and in Palla Palata of the Batticaloa Bintenna. I have been in communication with Mr. Birch, the present agent for government in that district, and, from specimens of their *patois* which he sent me, and which greatly resembles the Singhalese usually spoken, in those very words in which, in the Badulla district, the Veddah dialect differs from it, I am justified in describing them as having had, in some period of their history, more intercourse with the Singhalese than those of whom I am writing.

† Solely till 1855, when I succeeded in inducing them to turn their attention to cultivation; but they much prefer their own wild life, and their cultivation is very limited.

‡ In using the term Bintenne, I refer to that portion of the division of Bintenne which belongs to the Badulla district. A larger portion of the same division is in Batticaloa.

2: Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

I shall say nothing, for they have long associated, although they have not yet intermarried, with the neighbouring Singhalese. The former resemble those of Nilgala. If they are less wild, it is but a shade less wild, almost too slight to be called more civilized. They, in like manner, are distributed in small tribes or families. They live in huts formed of boughs and bark, not so much from any advance in civilization, as from the dearth of rock caves, which abound in Nilgala; but they, too, become Troglodytes in wet weather. They cultivate small patches of chena,* but their chief source of livelihood is the produce of the chase, and honey; and they move about from forest to forest, guided by the blossoming of the flowers, in search of bees and game. Their number in 1856 was 364, but some of these even were much more wild than others.

Both Nilgala and Bintenne Veddahs regard, for each tribe, particular tracts of country as their own, and are, as Knox tells us, careful not to trespass over each other's bounds, and they observe the custom, still prevalent among Kandyans, which entitles the lord of the soil to a portion of the game killed upon it.†

In my description of the wild Veddahs of Nilgala, and those of Bintenne, it is well to bear in mind that, though they are not fifty miles apart, there is no communication whatever between them. No individual Veddah of the one district ever saw one of the other. They are entirely distinct; but distinct only in geographical position. They have inherited the same customs, superstitions, names, and dialect.‡

In appearance, the Veddahs differ materially from the Singhalese. They are smaller in every respect, and rather darker, or, more properly, more dusky in complexion. They are short, slightly built, yet very active. Though far from being muscular, their limbs are firmly knit together, and they are athletic and capable of enduring great fatigue. Though spare, they are generally in very fair condition, and look more healthy than many of the Singhalese in the adjoining districts.§

The tallest Veddah I ever saw, a man so towering above his

* A "chéna" is a patch of ground cleared from the forest for cultivation. The jungle is burnt down, a crop taken off, and then suffered to grow up again. It is recleared again after intervals of from five to ten years.

† This custom is called gang-gâté, lit. village hind leg; "gama" would be better translated "township", as it signifies a tract of ground within certain limits. The lord of the soil claims the "hind leg" of any deer, etc., killed within his bounds.

‡ The Veddahs of the Badulla Bintenne appear a distinct sept; those of Nilgala are connected with a Veddah family living just across the Batticaloa boundary, close to which their country lies.

§ I use the term "Singhalese" and "Kandyan" in distinction from "Veddah."

3:Naish G-5 (1925) 1930 AX5 Vedda AX5

written from memory aided by not very adequate notes made shortly after the ceremony, helps to fill up a lacuna in the hitherto published records of Vedda customs and ritual.

In June of 1925 I was engaged, as a junior administrative officer, in dealing with an outbreak of cholera among the Muslim tobacco cultivators in the neighbourhood of a remote coast Vedda village, about forty-four miles north of Batticaloa on the Batticaloa-Trincomalee coast road. Investigation by the medical officer with whom I was associated soon revealed the fact that the focus of the infection was a yet more remote inland district lying behind that part of the coast, and that to grapple effectively with the disease it would be necessary to evacuate the population of that area and to concentrate it, for the treatment of the actually sick and for the segregation of the "contacts," in the comparatively accessible locality where we had already established ourselves, not far from the spot where the first cases to be brought to our notice had occurred. I therefore found myself obliged, at short notice, to enlarge the camp of which I had already begun the construction, and in particular to begin the building of a new hospital hut on a more grandiose scale than that originally contemplated. For the work of construction, which consisted of the erection of a framework of jungle sticks and the covering of it with *cadjans*,—dried and plaited palm branches,—according to the familiar village method, it was necessary to enlist the services of the coast Veddas of the adjoining settlement. The villagers were naturally reluctant to engage in work which they not unreasonably supposed would expose them to the infection, and it called for much tact and persuasiveness on the part of the Chief Headman of the *pattu* to get them to do so. Fully realizing that, apart from all other considerations, the occurrence of even one case of cholera among them would effectively put a stop to all co-operation, the Chief Headman and I took, successfully as the event showed, every possible precaution to prevent such a catastrophe. Everything seemed to be going on without let or hindrance when the Chief Headman upset my calculations by announcing that the work must cease for twelve hours on the 8th of June, to enable the villagers to perform a ceremony in honour of the *Periya Devi*

4:Lewis N-5 (ca. 1906-1918) 1919
AX5 Vedda AX5

175 commodities which would produce both directly and indirectly its effect upon local plant life, either by the introduction of species of economic value, or by the direct export of woods found at hand.

137 In support of this it is noticeable that to the north-west of Pottuvil, Palu (*Mimusops luxandra*) and Satinwood (*Chloroxylon swietenia*) are comparatively abundant, as contrasted with the scarcity of the same species on the banks of the Kumbukkan river. Again, while Mi (*Bassia longifolia*) is abundant on the Kumbukkan, it may be called rare west of Pottuvil. As this last-named is an introduction of great value, it was spared where it existed near towns, but was neglected in those localities where the population had no permanent settlement, as we find is the case with the majority of the Maha Wodirata "villages" of the present day, and it is only in some places of old establishment that we find the Mi tree now.

361 The present population is very much scattered, its distribution being undoubtedly governed by the presence or absence of water; hence it will be found that the so-called villages are at considerable distances apart, and only where a supply of water can be got, however small or impure, all the year round. On the other hand, one finds the example of an unpopulated area bounded by a perennial stream, as in the case of the valley of the Kumbukkan river for the last thirty miles of its course. Here, however, we have the instance of a stream that rises to an enormous flood that inundates the country to a depth of many feet on both its banks, thus drowning out, in the wet season, any annual cultivation, and leaving the place parched and dry during the periods of drought—two factors sufficient to keep back a people unprepared to establish strong measures to secure permanent occupation.

Nor is this all. The Kumbukkan river, after it passes the foot of the isolated mass of the Monaragala hills, enters a country that afforded the Veddas their best hunting ground, and the Veddas appear in their early history to have been a race of people who depended almost entirely on the chase, using for their dwellings the rudest shelters of caves and temporary branch huts. They had no inducement to build

4:Lewis N-5 (ca. 1906-1918) 1919
AX5 Vedda AX5

houses of lasting character, as neither their instincts nor habits necessitated such procedure. 361

At Kumuna alone we find a modification of these conditions, in that the greater part of the land where the village stood is above flood level, and possessed of constant fresh water all the year round, besides being at a spot where there was a prospect of trade.

It should be added that all the many anicuts on this river between Kumuna and Kebilitte bear silent testimony to the violence of the floods on the river, and to the once existence of a large population, that probably vanished as soon as these engineering works were destroyed—a population who could enjoy the benefit of the river's floodings by diverting the water into immense tanks, that now are but park-like pieces of jungle. 172

The present inhabitants of the region embraced within the boundaries recorded here are unquestionably of mixed origin, as it is easy to trace on the western limits the pure Sinhalese type of feature, these fading again to a more specific type through the Maha Wedirata, and again changing markedly on the north-east of that country, till it is practically replaced by Tamils in the Panawa Pattu. Thus, it would seem that the Vedda type lay between the Uvan Sinhalese on the west and the Tamil on the east, with the result that frequently one would hear men, while asserting that they were pure Sinhalese, conversing with each other in Tamil. This I found to be actually the case at Bowela, where the villagers insisted that they were of the Goigama caste. 101 162

I was completely baffled in my attempts to secure a vocabulary of Vedda words, though I offered liberal payment for a few lessons in that language. I was pointed out men who were able to speak Vedda, and it was arranged that we should meet, in secret, at a definite time, and at a fixed spot, but when the time came I was told the men had gone away to find stray cattle, or some other equally trumped-up story. 197 198

One night I camped close to some huts in the village of Wattegama, and after my lamp had been put out and I was supposed to be asleep, I heard an animated discussion in the nearest hut, but though I could hear every word, I did not

4: Lewis N-5 (ca. 1906-1918) 1919
AX5 Vedda AX5

753 not be drunk. Again, in case of fever a decoction would be
757 given of a number of vegetable productions that were *believed* to be cooling. I may here mention that when questioned as to the exact effect any one of these ingredients would specifically bring about, I could get no clear answer. I found that
[278] both *Cassia auriculata* and *Evolvulus alsinoides* were regarded as most beneficial in fever, but I failed to find an answer as to their direct action. Equally *Mussænda pumila* would be considered as a most valuable medicine for fits, as well as fevers.

[755] Charms and incantations appear to be more important than medicines with the people.

I found that castor oil was appreciated and its action understood, but it is curious to note that it is supposed to be effective by outward application, as well as inward. Generally speaking, I found that the local knowledge of our plants was very wide, and it would be difficult to find a plant of any use that the people could not correctly name.

137 In some cases where a plant was rare, I found that no name
824 could be given to it; as, for instance, I obtained a few examples of *Centranthera procumbens*, but the people had no acquaintance with its name whatever. Nor did I find names invented in order to afford answers to my questions: it was a case of giving the right answer, or expressing ignorance.

273 I might mention incidentally, that though our familiar Kitul (*Caryota urens*) is well known, I found the people equally unacquainted with toddy or jaggery, except as *purchaseable* commodities, just as much as kerosine oil is. This ignorance of a source of alcohol may have much to do
674 with the striking absence of crime in the country I refer to, and I mention it in passing, as worthy of consideration. On the other hand, I would again point out that owing to the rigidity of certain customs there is not the same scope for jealousy over women that plays such an important factor in crimes of violence in other parts of this Island. Again, it
●361 should not be lost sight of that in the Vedda country small
674 groups of people congregate round centres where water, however limited in quantity and impure in quality, is to be found, and are therefore much more mutually dependent

4:Lewis N-5 (ca. 1906-1918) 1919
AX5 Vedda AX5

than in densely populated areas, where the individuality of the creature is lost in environmental immensity. In the one case he and his are known, in the other he and they are but a fraction.

Considerations of space preclude my enlarging on this subject, or describing in detail the individual conditions of the different villages that I explored, but I venture to think that a careful examination of local factors would throw much light on the evolution of the race from its early stages of primitive existence to its present state of partial civilization.

Domestic Animals.—These consist of cattle, buffaloes, goats, dogs, cats, and fowls.

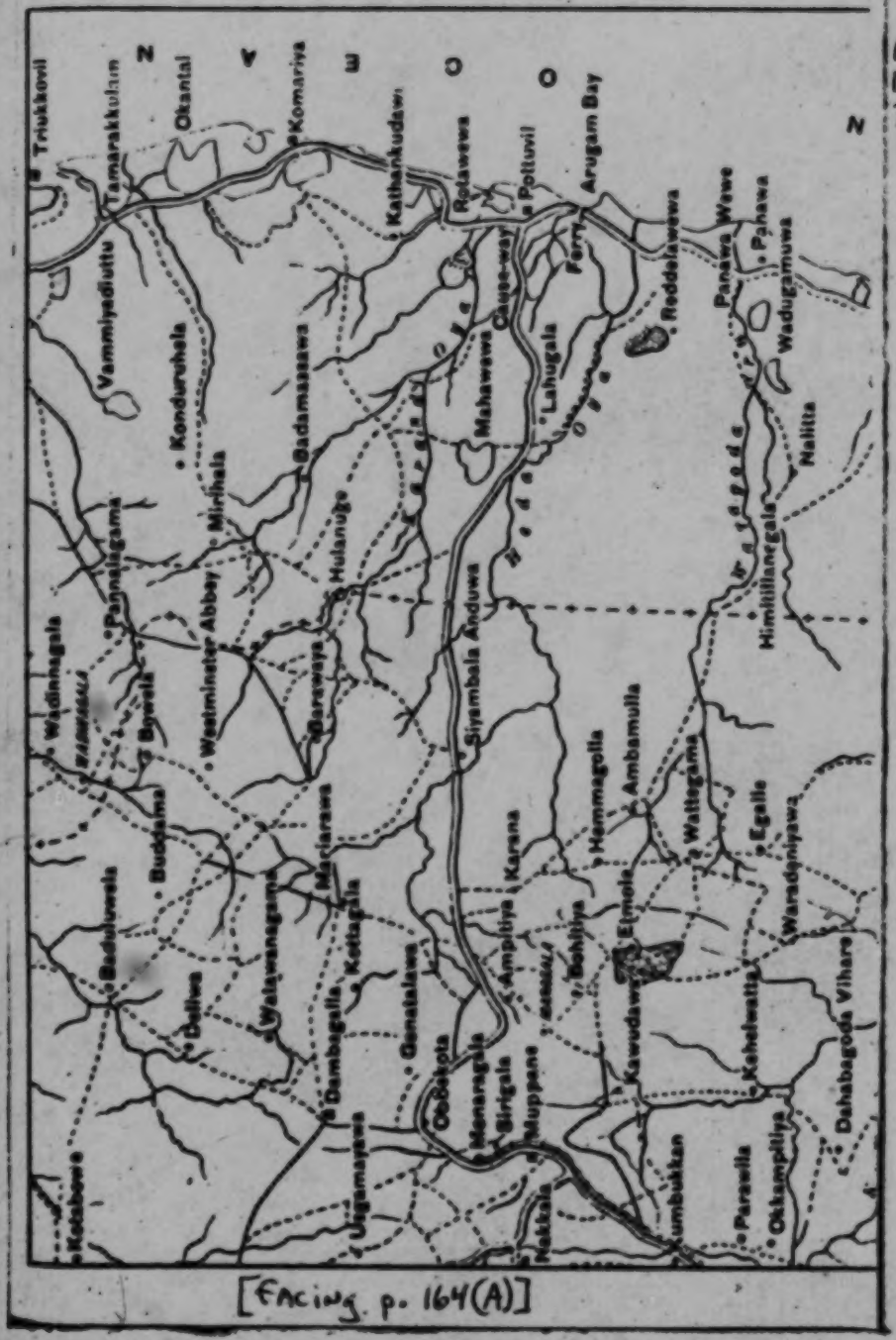
Black cattle are abundant in all the inhabited parts of the country I explored, and naturally more so where the opportunities for trade in them exists than in very isolated places. Milk is nearly always procurable, but I heard of no instance of children being exclusively reared upon cow milk. Buffaloes are, where possible, reared for agricultural purposes, and also for the supply of milk, which is often turned into a form of junket that is in much demand.

In one village in the Panawa Pattu I found a Tamil man owning a large herd of buffaloes, and to my surprise I found that he called them by individual names, the animals responding to his call.

I was informed that quite a large proportion of the domesticated buffaloes were half-breeds between the wild and the tame. This may explain why the Vedda-country animal is so much larger than the buffalo of, say, the Western Province.

Goats are rare, and only occur where there are Tamil or Moorish people. I met with them occasionally, but nowhere away from the influences above mentioned. Pigs, except wild, I never met with. Dogs are plentiful, and of a much superior build and type to the village pariah of the civilized country. This is doubtless due to the care the real Vedda has bestowed upon this animal from the earliest time. In point of size the dogs of the Vedda country are large, powerfully built, and bold. Black and white, or brown and white, are the usual colours of these animals. Cats are, generally speaking, scarce, though I remarked at Kumana that while I only saw one dog, I found six cats in that little village.

4:Lewis N-5 (ca. 1906-1918) 1919
AX5 Vedda AX5



[Facing p. 164(A)]

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4:Lewis N-5 (ca. 1906-1918) 1919
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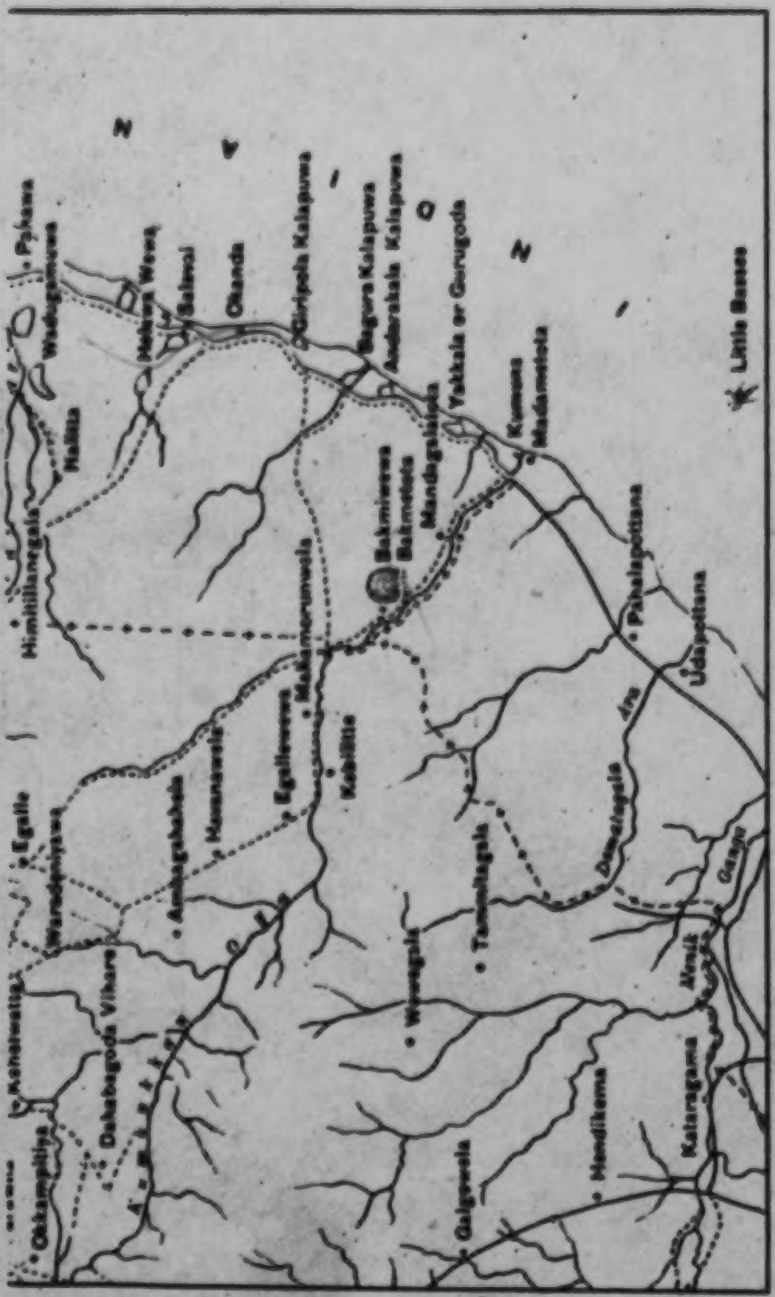

The Vedda Country.

[facing p. 164 (B)]

S: Spinal D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

136 The grass in the glades was so tall that it covered us entirely. One's only chance of encountering game lay at the forest margins, or in the infrequent patches of burnt ground, overspread with the tender spicous shoots of which the chital are fond. Parrots and doves broke the stillness of the evening with their crooning. Startled quails whirred from our feet crying vociferous caution to their crouching young, and sometimes we would flush a *patkan kukula*, a species of partridge. But the note that accorded most with the brooding genius of the place, was the mournful, incessant 'ho-ho, ho-ho' of the *kotuwa-kapua*, a cuckoo which, try as we might, we failed to see.

361 The next morning, provided with a small langur we shot on the way, we visited the Henebedde Veddas in their homes. Handuna's hut 231 stood at the foot of a densely wooded hill. There were a few cattle about which the Veddas tended for a consideration from the Sinhalese; and, what was even more unexpected, we found here a couple of hens with excellent broods; for, even the Sinhalese of these parts, as we learnt to our cost, kept no fowls. In these pursuits lie the nuclei that bid fair to tie nomadic hunters to fixed abodes.

342 Handuna's hut was a long low structure of wattle and bast thatched with straw, and partitioned into three or four dark rooms, occupied by [281 his family and those of his sons-in-law. At one end of the building was an 362] open living-room in which we were entertained with deer skins for seats. Slung from the eaves, at the other end of the hut, was a gourd, the mouth 231 of which was plugged with wax pierced with two small holes, through which bees busily entered and emerged. As I focussed my camera on this interesting example of Vedda apiculture, the enterprising showman naively remarked that a gentleman had once given him a rupee for that picture; but he might have spared the hint for the good it brought him.

343 Standing a little apart from the main hut, was a squat, kennel-like [841] structure for the segregation of women, during their monthly indis- [171] position. This feature is universal among jungle folk, whether Vedda, half-Vedda, Sinhalese, or Tamil. These sheds, barely sufficient for an individual to sit or lie crouched in, are often overgrown by jungle, and only crudely protected with bark-slats or deer skins; they have a fire-place at the open entrance; sometimes they are more hygienically built over trestles. Considering the poor protection they afford, and their nearness to the forest around, it must require some fortitude on the part of those occupying them, especially at night.

252 We now saw the monkey we had brought prepared for food. A slow fire was kindled in the garden; on this the carcase was placed, and turned over until well singed, emitting a most appetising odour. The smooth stone on which Handuna had up to now been seated, and which did service as seat or platter as occasion demanded, was requisitioned; the half-roasted animal was placed on it, disemboweled, and quartered with the blade of an arrow. A dog, that had been awaiting the opportunity, feasted on the offal in full view. The head was severed and split in half, [824 the limbs, dismembered, and the trunk broken flat. The various frag- 264] ments were then put back to roast. When all was ready, dainty morsels were served out to us on broad *kenda** leaves (the usual plates of these 262 people), with the polite request that we must eat first. A fragment of liver done to a turn, and a dainty hand with the charred little fingers

*Macaranga tomentosa.

turned in like a child's, fell to my share. I was contemplating the proposition with disgust, when, to my surprise, I saw my companion bravely tackling his; he recommended the meat as savoury. Not to be outdone, I gingerly followed his example, remembering that the nearer the bone the cleaner the flesh. While our chauffeur not only refused his share, but turned away with green-visaged disgust at the behaviour of his masters. The Veddas meanwhile applied themselves heartily to the meal, crunching hungrily bones and all; the brain and liver they regarded as special delicacies. 242

Our next course was a fragment of *kurrukkan* cake garnished with a pungent *sambol*; this was a more feasible dish—but for the sand one crunched with every bite. A handful of honey-comb brought the dreadful meal to a welcome close. It did not occur to our hosts that water for cleansing would be acceptable; a procedure they ignored, wiping their hands instead on the posts of the hut, their own bodies, or filthy loin-rags. The chatty in which they brought us water could no more stand on its base than an egg. 515

So far we had seen none of their women, but had heard subdued female voices in the adjoining room, and surprised the glint of dark inquisitive eyes between the bark-slats. It required no little persuasion to bring them out. Even to pose for their portraits these people wanted presents! There was not a woman among them who had the remotest pretensions to comeliness; what little of it they might possess, their graceless rags disguised. 123

About a half-mile from Handana's hut were the dwellings of the one-eyed Poromola and the sophisticated Kaira. We found the former disconsolately seated in his airy shed, with a little child on his lap, no less wistful than its grandsire. Patiently they awaited the return of the old man's wife and daughter, with the handful of grain they would earn for the day by working on a *chena*. 361 464 465

We secured some bows and arrows of fine workmanship here, and an *aude* which we mistook for a large arrow-head; but Kaira taking it said, "This is what we dance with," and suiting the action to the word, twirled the implement, tang and point, between his fingers, or shouldered it gun-wise, while he performed the shuffling semi-circular movements of a Vedda dance. 411 535

Thus ended our visit to Henebedde. That night, as we lay in bed, we heard a Vedda stave shouted lustily into the dark. It came from the watcher of a neighbouring field on his lonely look-out, and served as a variant to the "hoos" with which he kept away foraging animals. The refrain, *Ma mini, ma mini, ma deyya*, (Oh! great man, oh! great man, oh! great God) told of soul-hunger even in a people so primitive. We took it for a token of hail and farewell from the land of the Veddas. 241 533

Embillene's only claim to a name lay in the open *ambalam* (travellers' lodge), built high on strong posts that elephants might pass through without being tempted to destroy it. Here we found a team of pack-bulls and their drovers. The head of the *tavalam** was a loquacious fellow who took the whole forest into his confidence. People as a rule talk quietly in the jungle, subconsciously respecting, as it were, its solemnity; not so these drovers; their discourse is high-pitched, from 000

*Team of pack bulls.

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

[pp. 21-33 not processed]

CHAPTER IV

VILLAGE VEDDAS AND JUNGLE SHRINES

And here were forests ancient as the hills
Enclosing sunny spots of greenery

COLERIDGE

1. THE EMBRACE OF THE TREES

13 131 361 BURIED in the jungle ten miles north-west of Maha Oya lies the old Vedda village of Omuna. Forest, unbroken by the meanest glade, intervenes between. At a pool we flush a brace of bronze-winged pigeons or set a-chirruping a covey of small birds; while every now and then the scurry of unseen feet tells that the woods are live with game. Jungles darken early; by five-thirty a cathedral gloom creeps to the songs of roosting birds: the shama throats a rambling lay, the grubbing pitta sounds a shrill call, the cuckoo wakes, like a curfew, the forest echoes, "while like a long-roll drummer the night-jar thrills the treen."

It is all but dark when, through a break in the trees, the hill of Omuna stands before us; and the clamour of resenting dogs and a welcoming fire tell us we have reached the limit of an arduous walk.

13 823 Where the Vedda is, there is the inevitable rock. The tie between them is intimate. To the life, animal and tree, on the timbered sides of the hill the Vedda is beholden for sustenance. The boulder-bound stream gives him water, and there lurk demons watchful for his undoing, and tutelary ancestral spirits. Nowhere is the relation between men and rock closer than at Omuna; for from the heart of the hill flows a spring that does not fail in the cruellest drought. Is it a wonder the place has for ages been 144 favoured of the Veddas? But time the iconoclast breaks the oldest bonds; the half-Veddas* there to-day are not of the ancient stock; that died out some fifteen years ago.

000 Besides its association with the wild men, Omuna has other claims to interest. Like many another forest stronghold it is the site of ancient Buddhistic ruins—frescoed caves and headless, chest-battered Buddhas despoiled by treasure-hunters What induced the priests of old-time to seek such sanctuaries as this, it is hard to surmise; religious persecution perhaps, by their inveterate foes the Sivaite Tamils; or merely the claims of austere devotion. Be that as it may, it was in these fastnesses that the light of Buddhism was nursed when it flickered low, till, happening

*There is almost certainly no Vedda living to-day without Sinhalese blood in his veins. The term *half-Vedda* therefore may appear superfluous, but is used to designate Veddas who have intermarried with the Sinhalese and settled down to agricultural pursuits, the word *Vedda* being used for the wilder folk that depend mainly on the jungle for sustenance.

[p. 34]

5; Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1965 AX5 Vedda AX5

on serener days, it flamed through the Island making it its permanent home, while in India, the land of its birth, it dwindled away.

We had undertaken this trip with the object of visiting Meminigallagolla where we learned the wildest Veddas of the Eastern province lived; but on coming to Omuna we found that that place, only twelve miles away, was quite unknown to the present folk of Omuna, a pathless barrier of dense jungle intervening. We made the best of a bad job; and, abandoning our original project, struck west for Dolagalwella.

At evening we camped by a desolate pool called *Havan-kapane-mulle* (rush-cutting nook). There is barely a spot in these jungles, however lone, that has not its name, thanks to the nomadic Veddas. Here was a glade in which they hunted, or a pool at which they drank, there a hole in which an axe was found (*Poro-thutu-walle*).

The only indications of the track we followed were the barely recognisable prunings, fifteen years old, of saplings. The forest was ideal for travel; in the shelter of the great trees the morning air was cool and refreshing. Coming to the Maduru Oya we walked a mile up-stream and climbed the mimosa-covered bank, soon to be lost in a wilderness of trees. A leader monkey yelled a warning to his clan, a surprised sambur belled startlingly close; but after that a silence prevailed unbroken by the song of a single bird. We spent the night by a rocky streamlet close-hugged by dense forest walls. Heavy clouds crept over us to the rumblings of thunder. The blurred crescent of the moon struggled for freedom. Our camp fires crackled in the ghostly gloom, and quiet human voices pervaded the forest's deadly stillness save for the melody of the trickling water.

> A savage place! as holy and enchanted
> As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
> By woman wailing for her demon lover.

Deserted Mahaella marked the limit of our westward journey. Here we struck at right angles the northern track to Yakkure, but, before taking it, deviated south to the village of Dolagalwella. For three days we had followed uncertain game trails, and seen no human beings besides those of our company. The path now began to show signs of use: there were chipped trees, polished stones on which axes had been whetted, and fire-places where monitors were roasted. Obviously we were nearing civilisation! Indeed, here it was.

Scaling a strong stockade we found ourselves in a *chena*, some twelve acres in extent, in which nestled the half dozen huts of the closely related families of a Vedda patriarchy. The maize and *kurrukkan* crops had been taken, and the place was now rank with a catch-crop of vegetables and fruit: beans, brinjals, melons, cassava, plantains and papaws. Chillies luxuriated; there was not a compound but had its vermilion heap, not a hut but had a section partitioned off with frame and fire-place for drying them during the rains; chillies were the current coin with which these folk traded with the pedlar Moors.

The males of the settlement were away in quest of food, and only the women and children remained. No folk on earth, perhaps, are shier than Vedda women; in the presence of the stranger they are dumb. Some of them were relatively fair-complexioned, presumably from Kandyan admixture; all wore an abundance of bead ornaments, finger

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

2. YAKKURE

This be the verse you grave for me;
Here he lies where belonged to be;
Home is the sailor, home from the sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.

R. L. STEVENSON

THROUGH a lush meadow studded with fragrant wood-apple, we entered Kalukolu Eba a hamlet of some twenty huts nestling in the picturesque dishabille of a *chena* rank with maize, vegetables and chillies. Here as elsewhere in the Vanni there was much evidence of parangi (framboesia). Fully three-fourths of the people showed active or quiescent traces of the disease. A boy had a necklace of loathsome papules; a woman covered with nodes in practically every bone of her body was boiling a decoction of dry leaves as a salve; another was stewing monitor flesh in chilli-water.

The first sign of our nearness to Yakkure was a cattle-penstamped clean, where half a dozen boys were securing cows and yearlings for the night. Scratching around the stockade with the tameness of domestic fowls were a jungle cock and his dames, and from every side came the jerky cries of wild chanticleers. A cairn of tumbled stones marked the site of an old *vihare*. Blue in the distance, across a wide lagoon bordered with sedge, lotus and dead trees, stood the long rock called Gunner's Quoin, with a bare patch, high on its tree-mantled flank, pointed out to us as the Maraweethiya, a historic cave.

Yakkure itself was a negligently palisaded hamlet nestling ina grove of tamarinds, in full view of a beautiful tank. We were unfortunate in our choice of a camping place. Five days of seclusion in the forest had made us forget that the immediate proximity to a village always meant flies, smells, and embarrassing attentions from forward men and coy but curious women. There were other draw-backs too. At sunset, from a pool near by, came a low, ominous hum auguring ill for our night's rest. We lit fires, bestowed meticulous care on bed curtains, and bedaubed ourselves with mosquitol. The lapwing's desolate cry, the doleful music of water fowl, the booming of great owls, the distant trumpeting of elephants, and more than all, the baffled mosquito murmur around, soon lulled me to sleep. But my companion who had failed to stop up betimes several holes in his curtain, the inside of which was found at dawn to be plastered with a blood-sodden host, tells a different story!

Three miles from Yakkure are the well-known falls of the Mahaweli. At flood-time their thunder is heard at the village. Once in a decade the waters creep up to and submerge the huts, sending the people up trees, and their cattle into the forest to be drowned or killed by leopards. With a *kapua* (priest) for guide, for the place is held eerie, we set out to visit the falls. Skirting an ancient aqueduct (*yoda ella*) which tapped the river a mile above the falls, we came to open jungle bordering the banks, that allowed us free passage through its colonnades of giant

3. THE MARAWEETHIYA

Far or forgot to me is near,
Shadow and sunlight are the same;
The vanished gods to me appear
And one to me are shame and fame.

EMERSON

13 FROM Yakkure to Horiwila is six miles. The first part of the journey is through marsh; here the Mahaweli make a bend which all but encroaches on the path. The place is rank with vegetation. Tall grass thrives amidst sombre trees that stand apart, clothed out of all recognition in stoles of trailing mycania. The air is humid and oppressively still. One is glad to be rid of the swampy luxuriance with its strong suggestion of malaria.

Beyond a pleasant stretch of paddy, closer than we had ever seen it before, stood Gunner's Quoin. Tinkling cow-bells and the mournful cries of peafowl welcomed us to Horiwila.

361 144 The racial types we have passed, will repay review. Omuna, Dolagalwella and Kalukolu Eba were shifting *chena* settlements inhabited by Veddas with a large proportion of Sinhalese blood. Yakkure was a permanent village with the *chenas* apart; here the people called themselve Veddas but showed strong Tamil traits. The folk of Horiwila were not sure whether to call themselves Tamils or Veddas; while Manampitiya, beyond Horiwila, was a purely Tamil village. So does propinquity shape the type of Vedda, and forest penetration by the Sinhalese on the one hand and Tamils on the other, tend to obliterate the aboriginal race.

000 Decoyed by its beauty, we camped on a rock on the bund of the Horiwila tank, soon to learn that a stone exposed all day to the sun, was not the most desirable of camping places even at night. The stored heat radiating from the rock kept us awake till morning, and we rose quite unrefreshed for the good day's work before us, for to-day we would climb the Quoin, which, ever since we saw it across the marsh at Yakkure, beckoned us on. The Tamils of the place could only take us to the base 115 of the hill; from there a Vedda of the Ulpotta must guide us. It was quite an hour before we found him. I recognised him at once as Sinna an old friend; there were the bunions on his shoulder from carrying loads of lizards and yams, and there the hooked finger caused by a snake-bite [N3 when plucking a *kanava* comb from a creviced tree. A dwarf, with 15] frizzly upstanding hair and wild eyes, and shy almost to timidity, Sinna had nothing of the sophisticated Vedda about him. He lived alone with [166] his small family at the end of the rock. The rest of his people had left when the *kurrukkan* crop failed: but Sinna remained to gather a precarious living from the scanty pickings of the field. We came on him searching for food in the forest.

The poor fellow was in great distress that morning, his favourite dog having been taken by a leopard the previous night. Hearing the animal's

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flesh which they tore out and ate. They were afraid only of the buffalo and the dog. The Veddas, not very long ago, are said to have herded the last of them into a cave and destroyed them. Brute or man, persistent rumour in jungle countries brings the *Nittaewo* within the realm of the probable.

Entering the forest at Siyambala Anduwa, and working north, we strove to maintain a route as far removed as possible from civilisation represented by the coast road on the one hand, and the Badulla-Batticaloa road on the other.

Two miles within the jungle was the old path, now over-grown and abandoned, from Badulla to Pottuvil. It led hereabouts through a narrow pass guarded, it is said, a few generations ago by the Karande Hela Vedda who, having fenced it across, levied toll on travellers. Intercepting, as he did, a trade route from the interior to the coast, we may be certain he made a good thing of it, getting his share both of the *kurrukkan*, maize, vegetables and fruit of the *Vanni*, as well as of the paddy, salt and dry fish of the Coast.

Kandanketiya, nine miles from Siyambala Anduwa, boasts an ancient temple of the era of Dutugemunu. We found it in the keeping of a doddering priest of eighty, who showed us round, all the while muttering "hu-hu, hu-hu," his only form of comment. His bed-room, dark, airless and dirty, was better adapted to mice and spiders than human beings. A great brass spittoon, emptied he told us once in two weeks, was the proudest thing there. A stupendous bo-tree, planted by himself, mocked with its vigour the withered frame of him who had tended it. Throwing open the doors of his little temple, without much ado he bade us enter the holy of holies, and pointed proudly to pictures of *devas* and harpies, half spurred-fowl half woman, who he confidently asserted lived in the Himalayas. Incidentally he indicated a money-box on the altar. But no sooner were our donations secure than his interest in us rapidly declined, reaching its climax when we told him we were going: "All right, go," he said, settling down comfortably on his bed.

A hornbill flying repeatedly to a large tree attracted our attention. Perching itself wood-pecker-wise on the trunk, it fed the occupant of a hole there with berries which it brought out of its crop one by one. We were told this was the male feeding the female he had deprived of feathers and shut up in the hole. We suggested there might be young. "Not so," said a woman; "where then are the feathers and droppings at the root of the tree?" Here was an opportunity to test the truth of gossip we had heard regarding the domestic amenities of hornbills. A man was sent up to the nest. Squeezing his hand through the narrow opening he produced an egg; then seized something by the beak, and unsuccessfully tried to pull it through. With an axe he enlarged the hole and soon handed down to us a veritable travesty of a bird. Scared out of her wits, voiceless, featherless, with half-opened beak, she flapped pathetic wings and tumbled ludicrously about in attempts to escape. She was obviously unfit for existence in the outer world and we returned her to her dark abode. Rumour was right, the male hornbill took no risks.

Bowala village lies at the northern end of Westminster Abbey. Buried as we were in the forest depths, we had not seen the hill since leaving the heights of Haputale. Suddenly the leviathan bulked over the trees. "There, that is why it is called Govinda Hela*," said our guide pointing

*Goa inde hela—rock where the monitor lizard is.

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Deserted Bowels (Page 48)

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to a cleft fragment of stone resembling a giant lizard crawling up the sheer face of the rock.

We found Bowala deserted. The young coconut and areca palms, plantains, sugar-canes and pine-apples there were choked with grass and lantana. The huts were falling to pieces and leaked like sieves as we found to our cost when a shower overtook us; the grass thatch, ruined by white ants, was the home of innumerable rats, brahmin-lizards and poisonous *karawalas** that hung head-down from the rafters ready to strike.

The desolate state of the hamlet is explainable by the *chena* life of the people. In December, as the crops ripen, they forsake their homes for the shacks of the *chena*, leaving perhaps an aged couple behind. In April, when the crops of *kurrukhan* and maize have been taken, they return to the village to repair their huts and wean back to life such plants as have survived the inroads of wild animals and weeds. In July, *chena* land is leased again; and so the wasteful routine is repeated. A hamlet occupied for six months and abandoned for six has not much chance of headway. If the population of a village is at all numerous, there are sufficient people to occupy both *chena* and village, without detriment to either; if the community is very small they remain *chena* dwellers with no permanent homes; if intermediate, we find the state of things at Bowala. In favoured places a mere nucleus of human beings swells in time to a thriving and populous village. But in the insalubrious *Vanni* privation and ignorance keep the numbers low. Two dwindling villages may combine to save one from extinction. Often a place populous to-day is a wilderness to-morrow and *vice versa*. This is typical of the kaleidoscopic way the forest hamlets change. Names so fine on maps—Illukpitiya, Mahaella, Embillene—are found when reached to be derelict; a crumbling hut perhaps hidden in jungle, or a hardy tamarind or palmyrah the sole witness of vanished homes.

Bowala folk are better jungle men than many farther inland. Though far from fastidious in their choice of meats, for they eat the mongoose and rat, they abhor the porcupine, sure mark of Vedda ancestry. They fashion bags of beaten *riti* bark and carry pouches of monkey skin that ladies might envy. Their bed-frames are spanned with sambur-hide, their powder flasks are the dried scrota of sambur. A monkey skin, stretched over a coconut shell fitted with handle, screw and string, and manipulated with a small bow, serves them as a violin out of which they scrape mournful disharmonies. They snare the smaller animals, such as the hare, pangolin and chevrotan, with *habbakas* or weighted frames poised over passages used by these animals; we saw one of these set for chevrotan with a bundle of urine-drenched leaves for bait. Some among them could brave the formidable heights of Westminster Abbey in quest of the combs of the rock bee—the most hazardous of jungle pursuits.

We spent the night in a large cave at the base of Westminster Abbey and made the ascent next morning, replenishing our water bottles at a small basin formed by the buttressing roots of a rock-tamarind and rejoicing in the grandiloquent name, for so trivial a thing, of *Kothuru-pathaka* (gnat-water-hole).

It had rained all night and there was still a drizzle. Squeezing through crevices, crouching through low caves, climbing trees, clinging to rough

*Small venomous snakes.

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Gypsies E15
Ceylon

with muscular grace, performed the flower dance to the Peradeniya god for the favour of crops.

The women of Kadiniyaya slunk into their hovels at sight of us. A man sat scraping the hair off a girl's scalp with a blunt knife; another was muttering a spell over some lime juice for a fevered wretch. Swarming blue-bottles and a most unholy odour led to the discovery, in a covered hole, of putrid sambur entrails awaiting the pot; like civilised epicures they apparently fancied their game high!

Wadinagala, the southern Friar's Hood (the mountain that rose to Buddha's bidding), towered before us as we lay encamped in the picturesque little village of Landegama. Here we learnt that a company of gipsies, some fifty strong, had preceded us. These forest gangs, unlike those of the road, are nomadic shepherds, pasturing their herds in the jungle plains. They hunt the sambur with dogs and javelin. Approaching coastal towns from time to time they barter their cattle, and are on the whole fairly prosperous. But a gipsy is a gipsy the world over, faithful to traditions of snake-craft and beggary, and these are no exception, plying their trade among the poor villagers with an eye to a handful of grain or vegetables. Sooner or later we hoped to meet them, but for the present all the evidence we had of them were abandoned hearths and a helpless pup they had heartlessly abandoned.

At Landegama was a hunter who entertained us far into the night with jungle tales. He described to us how leopards caught monkeys. The animal climbs a tree in the line of feeding langurs, and waits concealed. When one of them comes near enough he springs on it and both fall to the ground. Should the attempt fail, the leopard gives forth a series of fearful growls and rushes hither and thither making great commotion; then suddenly becomes quiet and hides. Inquisitiveness is the monkeys' undoing; at first, uttering their cries of rage and terror, the 'ah-he-hik' so familiar to hunters, they look for him from secure heights; but not seeing him they become bolder and bolder and come down lower and lower; until eventually, one pays the price of his foolhardiness.

Wadinagala village, singularly enough, lies farther from the rock of that name than Landegama which nestles at its foot. Here was a medley of huts well illustrating the various types prevalent in the *Vanni*. The roofs of all were *illuk*-thatched; but the walls were various: a few were made of mud, some of wattle and bast, others of wattle and maize sheaths or of leafy twigs; while most had two or more of these combined.

A sudden shower, that caught us as we rested on the banks of the Palang Oya, proved the harbinger of many wet days to come. That evening we entered Kokunahare in the pelting rain, our clothes, bedding and food deplorably drenched. Rushing into the first hut we found we ousted its occupants with gentle persuasion. Cooking was out of the question; but our ever-ready lunch basket provided a menu of tongue, fruit salad, biscuits and cheese, and a thermos-flaskful of hot tea. What shifts the shivering carriers made for food or sleep we had not the courage to inquire.

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V 751 accompanied him, now struck the bear with his axe and, when she turned on him, killed her. So much for charms; excellent things—provided a weapon is in your hands. "Trust in God," says the Arabic proverb, "but fasten thy camel securely."

G 361 Uhana was a surprise; the place gave every promise of being in a few years a flourishing settlement, thanks to Government grants of land, cattle and grain on easy terms. Luck at last! Near Uhana was a gipsy camp. Wadinagala gave us first promise of these people; but like a mirage they had faded from stage to stage of our journey, leaving only their camp refuse to mock us. Now, here they were, within two miles of us. We stayed over the next morning that we might visit them. As we neared their encampment we met a man who told us that he had passed them on their way to another camp. They who had been here for weeks must needs pack and begone within an hour of our visit! They were bound, the man said, for a place a mile and a half away. We followed, but did not find them there; instead, was another tantalizer who assured us that we would find them on a knoll by a stream a mile and a half beyond. We proceeded, painfully aware that every step of our way must be retraced in the broiling sun before we could earn our lunch. Disappointment again! Almost tearful with frustration and fatigue, we had thrown ourselves down, when a kindly individual came to our aid.

"Rest here," he said. "I shall go forward and see. Come if you hear me 'hoo.' I can tell of their presence some distance away by the crowing of their cocks and the clatter of their camp." We waited and were rewarded.

G [492] [231] [343] On an undulant opening, reminiscent of Somerset pastures, we found the gipsies. They had just unloaded their pack-bulls and were setting up camp under the blazing sky of noon, disdainful of the shelter of the cool environing jungle—the very antithesis of Vedda ways. Cattle and fowls flecked the glade; boys led goats into the forest. Women, graceful as Dianas, were erecting talipot shelters over collected household goods and communal stacks of grain. Tall men, lithe and sinewy as grey-hounds, with mongrels at their heels, carried naked babes. Children, reading favour in our faces, essayed shrill nasal choruses clapping arms

G 622 to chest. The chief, a quietly curious, grizzled man, with a care-free air bred of the freedom and independence of his life, held in play a vicious cobra just captured. He summed the gipsy life in a sentiment savouring of Borrow: "What are we?" he said. "Children of the open ways, bronzed by the sun, soaked by the rain, born on the trail, buried on the

G 411 224 trail. That is our life." They had a sambur spear among them, and apparently only one man adept in its use; but that spear, their little dogs and their own untiring sinews were match enough for any sambur once started.

V 361 From Uhane to Kotelinda by way of hill-girdled Bokkebedda in the drenching rain. Here, at a glance, we noticed crude little Vedda huts amidst those of the Sinhalese villagers. We were now among the hills of Madana long famed for Veddas; but to-day their caves are only

V 103 tenanted by bears. Up to now we had traversed a stretch of country designated on the maps Maha-Veddi-Ratta (Great Vedda Country)—an empty name of about as much significance at the present time as the term Cinnamon Gardens applied to Colombo. Kotelinda lies in the

V 131 centre of a region that is to-day the last stronghold of the Veddas—that

4. FRIAR'S HOOD AND THE VEDDAS OF GALMEDE

ACCOMPANIED by Kauwa and a Tamil, we left Divulana to enter upon the wildest part of our journey. The *illuk* glades, so familiar to us for many days, now gave place to jungle sunless, forsaken, virginal and silent save for the cry of a cicala or the rustle of a jungle cock or chevrotan.

Crossing the Amankelle Oya we came to the deserted home of the Bandaradua Veddas—Kauwa's old home. It outlay a glade in full view of the Bandaradua rock. All that now marked the place were a cadju tree, that spread its branches in a great canopy, and a few live fence sticks all overgrown with *pussela-wel*, the pounded bark of which the Veddas soak in water rendering it soapy for cleansing their lousy heads.

Late in the evening we were at the foot of Friar's Hood, that loneliest of Ceylon's forest hills, the landmark of the old Portuguese mariners. The environing jungle was sinister with the menace of unseen things. Here our guide had once encountered a gang of no less than six bears, and indicated to us the very trees up which he and his companion had shinned. It was not the sort of place one would care to be in alone; and yet, in a clearing by the rock, a Moor had recently lived with his wife for three years, growing amidst his cassava a deadlier plant,* the joy and bane of Eastern lands.

We camped on this deserted plantation. As it darkened a sambur belled and stamped around us in high dudgeon that his accustomed pasturage had been usurped. The hooded peak before us melted into the gloom, only to stand out again under the stars more sinister and secret than ever. This lonely outlaw, standing away from the herded hills, had survived a race of men. It was there when the first paleolithic ancestors of the Veddas crossed from India, when Ceylon and that land were one. Towards it, and the security it afforded, was the best remnant of that race gradually driven by succeeding waves of civilisation through the long years. To-day around it the last of the Veddas are dying. And yet,

> The hills are shadows and they flow
> From form to form, and nothing stands;
> They melt like mists, the solid lands,
> Like clouds they shape themselves and go.

It is difficult to say where Galmede really begins. We must ascribe to it all that tract of deserted *chenas*, with their crumbling Vedda shelters and *mora* forests devastated by elephants, between Friar's Hood and the Magalawatavan Oya, on the other bank of which stand the few huts that comprise the Galmede of to-day. This place, the port of our dreams, we entered with beating hearts.

The first individual to meet us was no Vedda at all but a Chetty!

"Where are the Veddas?" I asked eagerly.

"There are no Veddas here," he said.

*Cannabis indica.

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

"But surely there are Veddas in Galmeda; everybody told us so," I insisted.

"Veddas of a sort, yes," was the reply; "and perhaps among them, one or two good ones; but the best live away in the caves, in those rocks yonder. Now if you'd come yesterday you'd have seen two of them who brought me some *goas* in exchange for betel and tobacco."

Disappointment melted into sudden hope. So, there were real Veddas still left. But oh! these people. Was ever chase so disheartening? Always the promise, never the fulfilment. Were we chasing phantoms of the wilderness, mocking spirits of a dead race, intolerant of the intrusion on their tranquil sepulchres?

There was no possibility of visiting the cave-Veddas that day. So I decided to stay over and visit them the next morning, travelling across the pathless hills to the high road; while my companion,—fed up to the teeth by now at the very mention of the word Vedda, and in a bad way with festering tick-bites, heat exhaustion, and lack of fresh food—tried to dissuade me from an adventure that promised no success. But I was bent on it. So we agreed that most of the bearers should accompany him to Maha Oya by an easier route, while I remained behind with three men and a two days' ration of tinned food.

With nightfall my prospect of securing a guide to the Galmeda hills was no nearer than in the morning. The only man who could be relied on was down with fever. I was seated disconsolately in the Chetty's garden after dinner, close to a chatting group, when suddenly I saw a shadow slip in out of the darkness and join them; there was some whispering; "Ah, is this the man they call Meenemaruwa?*" I heard one of my bearers ask.

"Yes, I am he they call murderer, rogue and everything besides." The answer came loud and unabashed from the man himself.

Rumour had spoken of him as far away as Kotelinda; and it had not spoken kindly. He lived three miles up the river by himself, inspiring the neighbourhood with awe of him. He was in a quandary that night. Returning home after a short absence, he had found that his brother had been taken into custody for illicit *chena* cultivation. He waxed eloquent on his wrongs, while the others listened: "Now what I want to know," he said "is why they should have taken my brother, who is a fool and cannot say a word in his defence, when they might have taken me? No, they wouldn't do that because I can talk. My brother cultivated the *chena* it is true, but it was I who gave it to him; the land is mine. They want me to pay taxes, I who am a Vedda! My grandmother was a Vedda of Veddas, you should have seen her. How well I remember the piece of human liver she carried in her betel-bag. We children would take it from her and want to throw it away; she would pluck it from us, saying, 'Hu, what do you want with this, isn't it mine?' Io, why do they treat me like this? Someone is angry with me. It must be the *aratchi*. No, the *aratchi* is good to me; he and I are friends. Now *Hettyar*, what must I do? I must go to the courts myself and get a petition drawn." Thus he talked interminably, while I wondered how a Vedda could come to argue like a lawyer.

"Now leave all that aside," I interrupted, "and tell me how I am to see these Veddas of the rocks tomorrow."

*Murderer.

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

He left the group and seated himself before me—a sinewy, handsome, bearded man of perhaps forty.

"Those Veddas," he said contemplatively, when I told him how we stood; "who can say where they are? In one cave to-day, in a another to-morrow. They said they came from Dhik-galge, did they? But you can never take a Vedda's word for that. If they are not there—what then? All our trouble will be in vain. I cannot say I know the caves in those hills very well. I have only been among them once, and that many years ago, when I took my wife from her people. She and I wandered about there. How well she knew the trails, she who had trodden them but once as a little child; for her home, like mine, was elsewhere. I would see a track and point to it saying, 'This must be the way to the cave.' 'No,' she would say 'that leads to the wilderness; there should be a path by that tree yonder'; and she would always be right. I remember well the *kong* tree by the Alu-galge; I shot two monkeys and we ate them there." And so his thoughts rambled amid honey-moon scenes he loved to recall.

But, as this meandering led nowhere, I offered a reward of five rupees to anyone who would show me the Veddas in their caves on the morrow, and took to bed. For long I lay pondering what manner of man was the Chetty who could live in this wilderness with a Vedda woman for wife. He seemed to know intimately every Vedda in the district, and had sometimes even shared their caves. He remained an enigma, as also that smile of his, no more than a mere display of the teeth, which imbued the knit, pathetic cast of his features with an expression whether of saintliness or villainy, it was hard to tell. Ostensibly he was here to rear cattle; but why come so far for that?

The next morning, accompanied by Meenemaruwa, the Chetty and a half-Vedda of Galmede, we set out on our quest. The plan was this; we were to travel to a spot where a certain stream crossed the path: there we would probably find foot-prints; if these led to the hills we would follow, if in the opposite direction, pursuit would be useless, as that would imply that the Veddas had returned to their homes in Bingoda fifteen miles away; for at this season the Veddas did not live in their caves, and the party we were in search of must have come on a few days hunting. I now understood the reticence of these people to take me on what might prove a wild goose chase; and learnt, what was more important, that the Veddas of Galmede were the Veddas of Bingoda.

We came to the stream; the foot-prints were there. Our guides bent down eagerly examining them. "This is Suthubanda's," they said "and this Badapissa's; this other is a woman's; no, it's a boy's." The tracks pointed towards the hills! The chase began.

Meenemaruwa led, for he alone could decipher that trail, three days old, on the hard dry ground. Once we left the stream there was apparently not the faintest indication of a foot-mark; but our guide moved rapidly along, and soon involved us in an enforested labyrinth of hills. Very occasionally a broken twig would furnish a clue. Indicating one of these Meenemaruwa said, "Now, that would never have been done had old Handuna been alive. 'Hu,' he would have said, slapping the errant one, 'do you want to show everybody the way to our caves; then where would we go if people came after us?' To the rock, the cave and the hive there must be no clue; that is the Vedda law.

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114 487 Even a Vedda child should be able to pick its way through the jungle with no mark to guide it."

● 361 342 114 We had travelled thus a long while, and for all I knew had lost all trace of the Veddas, when we struck a stream where the foot-prints of a man and a dog were evident. Soon we were climbing up to Dhik-galge, to find, alas ! that not only was it deserted, but that no Veddas had been near it for many a long day. The Veddas had lied to the Chetty !

The cave we found ourselves in was a magnificent one—long, spacious and open to the sky, with tall straight trees towering before it. Below, a stream babbled over rocks, making delightful bathing pools. Around, was the tenderest music of birds. It was a romantic spot, specially designed, as it were, by Nature for the jungle dweller. The dome of the cave was covered with crude drawings. A broken pot had been put in a niche. There were fragments of filthy rag, a large cooking frame and dry leaves which had long previously been slept upon. The rocky floor was smooth in places where *kurrukkan* had been rubbed to flour with flat worn stones, and cupped where maize had been pounded. The *aratchi* of Paragahakelle had spoken true. A handful of moss, peeping from a crevice, revealed, when disturbed, a couple of fledglings. Our first thought was that they were young swiftlets, left there to die by ruthless nest-hunters ; but they flew too strongly for that ; and soon, the piteous cries of the parent birds told us that we had inadvertently rifled a fly-catcher's nest.

114 It was mid-day, and, being very tired, we sat down to a meal ; I to camp-pie and chocolate, the others to raw cassava. Our hunger abated, I reminded our guides that my offer of a reward still stood, and that he would get it, who brought me up with even one of those Veddas wherever he might be. Asking us to stay where we were, Meenemaruwa and the half-Vedda of Galmede vanished into the jungle.

The better part of an hour must have elapsed when we heard the latter calling to us excitedly. He said that Meenemaruwa was in hot pursuit of the Veddas who, to judge by their traces, were making away at great speed, evidently scared by the sight of my shoe-prints.

222 224 482 142 609 Following at a run, we eventually came upon them—a wild, swarthy group of two men and two boys, freighted with the spoils of the chase ; each with his sackful of edible bird's nests, dried sambur meat and *bambara* honey ; the leaders with two old muzzle-loaders. May the picture not fade. Suthubanda was there, and the youth Badapissa as our sleuths had told us. But the figure that arrested my fancy most was a wild, fiery-eyed, shaggy-haired fellow of twenty-five—an ebon Apollo. Gama he was called because he was born on a journey (*gamana*). To his waist was attached the inflated bladder of the sambur they had killed. Nor did his looks belie his character, for, even as we came up, [578] he flared into foul-mouthed fury at a tired, inoffensive boy of their company.

They were delighted with the tobacco and betel we shared out to them, and gave us honey in return. Money they refused. When we asked them how it was that they had not been in Dhik-galge as they had said they were, their only answer was a hearty laugh !

660 It was hail and farewell ! for the hour was past noon, and the Veddas had many miles to make before nightfall ; so had we. But those shadows of the spangled forest were soon to call me again.

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

these Veddas. Bingoda is not all Vedda; essentially it is a Sinhalese *dema* village of about six or eight families, within a stone's throw of which are the crude huts belonging to the few surviving Veddas. Through a tangle of overgrown scrub we reach them; they are not so numerous that we cannot easily name every single Vedda there.

Three we have met before, Suthubanda, Gama and Badapissa; it was they who led us such a chase at Galmede. In the first hut we find the swarthy Gama and his comely young wife Kalu—his fifth experiment in matrimony: and he barely twenty-five! Not far from this is Suthubanda's abode, in which are his wife, the skinny Thuthi, mother by previous marriage of Gamma; their two little boys, Handuna and Naida and girls Kumi and Punji. Handuna is the quaintest brat imaginable; he is ash-coloured from top to toe, through crouching by the hearth all night to keep warm his naked body; for, all he has for cover is a little strip of loin cloth drooping erratically from a slack waist-string that sags well below his nates; his rotund abdomen accommodates an enormous spleen; with hands crossed over shrugged shoulders to keep the chill away, he gazes quizzically at you.

Away from these two homes, across the stream, is the only other Vedda hut. Unlike those of Suthubanda and Gama which are of wattle and dust, this is a sadly dilapidated mud structure once occupied by a Moor. It is the most pathetic and curious menage here, and belongs to Kaira brother of Suthubanda. His wife Randunna, a hideous squint-eyed thing, is mother by a previous husband to Heenthuthi the twelve-year old wife of Badapissa (Muthua), Kaira's younger brother! A more ridiculous pair it would be hard to find: the wife a mere child, the husband barely more. The Veddas favour such early marriages, saying that, growing up thus together, the two learn to love each other well. Be that as it may, it does seem a most piteous travesty of human matings. Huddled by the hearth and shivering with ague, is old Thanthi mother of the clan, and wife of the dead chief Neela. And, lastly, we have here the most pathetic figure in all Bingoda—Kummi, a girl of fifteen, dust-besmeared, ulcerated, crippled, and so scantily clad that she is ashamed to stand lest she reveal her nakedness. A misery to herself and others, she sits apart with face shyly lowered, taking timid glances every now and then, like some wild thing, from large black lustrous eyes that might have shone befittingly on the face of some proud beauty.

To these, though they now dwelt apart at Mullegama, we must add Kaurala and his family, for he too was of Bingoda, and is maternal uncle of Suthubanda. By his two wives, Balli and Ranni, he has four little sons, Kaira Vanniya, Heratha, Kalua and Sela; and two daughters, Ranni and Dingi.

These details, though perhaps tedious, serve to bring out vividly the intimate inter-relationships of the Veddas, their apparent disregard of appearance or age in their choice of wives, the promiscuity of life in their one-roomed homes—mother, child and father all lying huddled together in a little space. For all that it must not be assumed that Veddas are devoid of a moral code. A man may have more than one wife, it is true; and, if it pleases him, he may cast her aside like a worn garment; but to each man his own woman while she is his; that is the Vedda law which all respect.

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and terrified they stood around the border. Then did the Saviour cause the pleasant Giridipa (Highlands) to come here near to them, and when they had settled there, he made it return to its former place. Then did the Saviour fold his rug of skin; the devas assembled, and in their assembly the Master preached them the doctrine. The conversion of many kotis of living beings took place and countless were those who came into the precepts of duty. The prince of the devas craved of him something to worship. The Conqueror, who had pure and blue black locks, passing his hand over his head, bestowed on him a handful of hairs. And he, receiving this in a splendid golden urn, when he had laid the hairs on a heap of many coloured gems, seven cubits round, piled up at the place where the Master had sat, covered them over with the thupa of sapphire and worshipped them.

"When Sambuddha had died, the thera Sarabhu, by his miraculous power, received, even from the funeral pyre, the collar bone of the Conqueror and brought it to Lanka and laid it in that same cetiya.

"The king Dutthagamini, dwelling there while he made war upon the Damilas (Tamils) built a mantle cetiya over it eighty cubits high. Thus was the Mahiyangana-thupa completed."

Barely four miles from Alutnuwara is the beautiful tank of Horabora Wewa whose vast waters have been cunningly trapped by a great earth work or bund, amidst a natural barrier of surrounding hills. As one sits here of an evening and looks across with field glasses to the wilder opposite shore, small herds of deer may be seen feeding on the grassy edge between forest and lake; and in the drought, herds of elephants come to the water. White cranes fly overhead to roost on the bordering trees at dusk. Placed as it is in the heart of the Vedda country, this tank has long been associated with the Veddas. To-day only a few very destitute families of half-Veddas are to be found at Malgoda on the borders of the tank, living in the crudest of shelters, and feeding for the most part on the seeds of lotus pods (*olu*).

By an ancient sluice cut out of stone,* the tank-water is conducted along a channel to a wide stretch of paddy fields, now mostly in disuse owing to the paucity of the population. This brimming waterway, its grassy banks studded with beautiful trees, affords many a delightful picture, especially where the lotus thrives with its large, snow-white blossoms and no less beautiful leaves be-diamonded with sparkling drop-lets of water. Here halcyons fish all day. Up to recent years the tank itself was covered with lotus; but now, for some reason or other, there is none; and when no breeze stirs the glassy waters at midday, they reflect an ever changing panorama of dazzling clouds only broken where a darter or cormorant gambols.

It is not surprising that so beautiful a tank should have inspired a fine poem, of which I have attempted a poor translation that does scant justice to the euphonious idioms, the long vowel cadences, the alliterations, and rhymes of the Sinhalese original.

*Tradition has it that two giants (*yodhayas*) sat here on opposite sides of a crack in the great rock, and each, seizing that part on which he was seated with his hands, and thrusting with his foot against the other, wrenched the rocks apart, making an outlet for the water!

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interfusion of Vedda blood—the apathetic look, the scanty beard, were unmistakably there. The area we had to traverse was not extensive, hemmed in, as it was, by the Bibile-Maha Oya road on the one hand and Mahaweli on the other. It is five miles from Alutnuwara to Arawatta; six miles from that to the Ulhitiya Oya; thence seven to Beligallu which is within four to six miles of Bulugahadena and Dambana, the Vedda haunts of to-day. The going is through forest comparatively well peopled; and *chenas* are frequently met with; changing from year to year, these often absorb the path and obliterate it, causing deviations which lead astray even guides conversant with the country a few months previously.

We were nearing Bulugahadena when we met our first Vedda of these parts—a tall, picturesque fellow with ear-rings, shouldering his bow stave with a small gourdful of honey slung on its end. Unspoilt, reserved and natural, in contrast to his fellows whom we afterwards met, he was the finest Vedda we saw in Bintenne.

In an environment, not of virgin forest, but of derelict *chenas* we found the Veddas of Bulugahadena. They lived scattered about, a hut or two to each *chena*, and not in groups as one so often sees; the explanation we were given for this was not the obvious one that *chenas* were apparently easier of acquisition here than elsewhere, but that it served to keep the families apart and prevent social entanglements, Veddas being very jealous of their women.

There was no reserve about these people. As we approached each hut, the men, armed with axes, bows and arrows, came out and greeted us vociferously in the Vedda language; Sinhalese they affected not to know. Their women were mostly sullen and silent; but one at least gave us a better reception than her husband did. Here and there a sickly wretch craved for medicine.

Their huts, made of bark slats and wattle, were too well built for Vedda habitations; they had not that crudity and unkemptness so characteristic of the huts of the wilder Veddas, and most of them were finished off with a neat fence-work. There was no lack of *kurrukkan* and maize here; and on the whole they seemed a fairly prosperous and contented community.

The Veddas of Dambana, who lived four miles away, were much the same as those of Bulugahadena; and so were the others we met scattered about these jungles. One lot we found picturesquely grouped in a rock-shelter, reproducing to perfection the old cave life; but they were obviously there for our benefit!

Of these Veddas, considered as a whole, we may say that we had never before seen so many of them as on this short trip of barely a week. On previous journeys, after having traversed miles and miles of jungle, we had met only a Vedda here and a Vedda there, never more than a dozen in all, often but one or two. But in Bintenne we saw no less than about fifty good specimens. Though they were obviously sophisticated by their nearness to Badulla and the many occasions on which their representatives had been on show, Vedda blood is still strong in Bintenne. This is the place to come to if one wishes to pick up the few words that are left of the Vedda language, and the art of making bows and arrows; but apart from that, these people are too civilised to be interesting.

One episode we experienced here is worth recalling. Two Veddas, better disposed towards us than the rest, one with his lip all askew from